

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-10 SPC-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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EUR-25 DRC-01 /104 W

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R 190516Z DEC 73

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9782

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: PPP WINS ANOTHER BY-ELECTION

REF: LAHORE 1365

1. PPP CANDIDATE S.M. MASOOD WON DECEMBER 16 BY-ELECTION FOR LAHORE (NO. 1) PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEAT RENDERED VACANT BY DEATH OF PPP INCUMBENT (SHEIKH SAFDAR ALI). MASOOD CAPTURED 12,688 OF 23,946 VOTES CAST. CLOSEST OPPONENT WAS OPPOSITION CANDIDATE WHO POLLED 10,644 VOTES. TWO INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES WON 452 AND 162 VOTES RESPECTIVELY. LIGHT VOTING (21 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE) WAS PROBABLY DUE LARGELY TO DISMAL WEATHER IN LAHORE (SOME 56,000 VOTERS TURNED OUT HERE DURING 1970 ELECTIONS), BUT VOTER INDIFFERENCE TO VIRTUALLY FOREGONE RESULT PROBABLY PLAYED ROLE.

2. PPP MOUNTED FULL-FLEDGED CAMPAIGN FOR BY-ELECTION, AND ROLLED OUT SEVERAL BIG GUNS, INCLUDING GOP HEALTH MINISTER SHEIKH RASHID AND WINDUP EFFORT BY GOP INFORMATION MINISTER MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI. MAIN THRUST OF NIAZI'S REMARKS WAS APPARENTLY DESIGNED TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM RISING PRICES, WHICH AT ONE POINT THREATENED TO BECOME PRIMARY ISSUE IN CAMPAIGN. (MAULANA

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MOSTLY TALKED ABOUT REFURBRISHED INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF PAKISTAN, WITH HEAVY EMPHASIS ON FORTHCOMING ISLAMIC SUMMIT, AND TOLD

HECKLERS THAT UNLESS GOP SPENT HEAVY SUMS FOR DEFENSE, THERE WOULD BE NO PAKISTAN.)

3. ACCORDING TO SENIOR GOPUNJAB OFFICIAL, BOTH CAMPAIGN AND VOTING WERE RELATIVELY QUIET AND CLEAN. HE BELIEVED PPP DECIDED TO RISK STRAIGHT FIGHT IN SAFE CONSTITUENCY TO SEE IF HONESTY WOULD WORK. (PPP DID, HOWEVER, USE SOME GOVERNMENT FACILITIES, INCLUDING TRANSPORT TO BRING VOTERS TO POLLS.)

4. ATTORNEY SYED MOHAMMAD MASOOD (GENERALLY KNOWN AS "S.M.") WAS BORN IN LYALLPUR IN 1933 OF MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY (FATHER IS RETIRED POSTAL EMPLOYEE). HE HOLDS LAW DEGREE FROM GOVERNMENT LAW COLLEGE, LAHORE, AND HAS BEEN ADMITTED TO LAHORE HIGH COURT AND SUPREME COURT BARS. HE HAS REMAINED ACTIVE IN POLITICS SINCE HIS SCHOOL DAYS, WHEN HE PARTICIPATED IN MUSLIM LEAGUE MOVEMENT TO CREATE PAKISTAN. HE IS FOUNDER-MEMBER OF PPP AND JOINED BHUTTO CAMPAIGN IN 1967. HE HAS HELD SEVERAL IMPORTANT PPP OFFICES AND IS NOW MEMBER OF PUNJAB PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE.

5. MASOOD HAS LONG BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH SHEIKH RASHID, AND WAS AT ONE TIME CONSIDERED "REVOLUTIONARY" LIKE MINISTER. HOWEVER THAT IMAGE HAS DISSIPATED, AND MASOOD, WHO IS ALSO FRIENDLY WITH PM BHUTTO AND PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER KHAR, WAS REPORTEDLY OFFERED SLOT IN PUNJAB CABINET, BUT APPARENTLY DECLINED, SAYING HE NEEDED INCOME FROM LUCRATIVE LAW PRACTICE. HE ALSO TEACHES (INTERNATIONAL LAW) PART TIME AT GOVERNMENT HIMAYAT-E-ISLAM LAW COLLEGE, LAHORE, AND, ACCORDING TO CONGEN LOCAL WHO KNOWS HIM, WAS OFFERED POST (FIRST SECRETARY LEVEL) IN PAK FOREIGN SERVICE BY BHUTTO; HOWEVER, OPENING LAPSED DURING MASOOD'S LENGTHY HOSPITALIZATION (1973) FOLLOWING AUTO-MOBILE ACCIDENT. LOCAL ADDS THAT MASOOD IS GOOD ORATOR AND DEBATER, AND HAS MADE STUDY TOURS IN AFGHANISTAN, IRAN AND TURKEY. MASOOD IS MARRIED.

6. COMMENT: MASOOD WON BY-ELECTION WITH COMPARATIVELY NARROW MARGIN (PPP CANDIDATE RUNNING AGAINST SAME OPPOSITION WON 1970 ELECTIONS WITH LEAD OF ALMOST 20,000 VOTES.) MOST OBSERVERS IN LAHORE BELIEVE MASOOD WOULD HAVE RECEIVED MANY MORE VOTES, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR INCLEMENT WEATHER. IN ANY CASE, PPP CONTINUES TO BAT 1000. NEXT BY-ELECTION IN CARDS IS RACE FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT VACATED BY PAK AMBASSADOR TO LONDON DAULTANA (VIHARI IN MULTAN DISTRICT -- ON DECEMBER 30).
GRIFFIN

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